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Promoting Sexual Health of Sailors and Marines

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April is Sexual Health Month. Let's all commit to doing one thing to help our people protect their sexual health.



People in the business of keeping healthy Sailors and Marines healthy spend much time talking about tobacco, nutrition and exercise. It's right and well that they do this. Meanwhile, much less time is spent talking about sexual health.

If you think about it, a smoking, burger-eating, Sailor or Marine can deploy. Conversely, a Sailor or Marine who just discovered she has an unintended pregnancy or he has HIV is typically out of the fight, a least for a while.

Each year, thousands of Sailors and Marines experience an unplanned pregnancy, and about every four days another is diagnosed with HIV. If we could help our people avoid these consequences, wouldn't we want to try?

Promoting sexual health is not the same as promoting fruits and vegetables – because talking about anything “sexual” in our culture can be controversial, value-laden and emotionally-charged. In fact, most workplace wellness programs in the United States do not include sexual health topics. Talking about sex can be difficult. But it can be done. In fact, the Navy and Marine Corps require every organization to conduct sexual health promotion for their people.

But what do we say? Luckily, there are ready-to-use materials available from the Navy and

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Marine Corps Public Health Center's Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP) – films, fact sheets, posters, and briefings. These are available on the web and on a DVD. Check these out here: <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/hp-toolbox-april.aspx>

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